

AI GOVERNANCE · LEADERSHIP · FRONTIER TECHNOLOGY

The Comparison Trap

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There has never been a technology that is so easily implemented and can think and act like a human.

Through my decades of technology experience, I have taken part in wave after wave of technology evolutions. In fact, my focus has always been leveraging the evolution in technology to accelerate strategic execution. Now we have a technology evolution in AI that is leaving strategy at the starting line.

The societal implications of AI are not abstract. They affect daily lives now and are no longer a futuristic concept. They are arriving, in the organisations that serve communities, deliver essential services, care for the vulnerable and shape the next generation. When AI influences a hiring decision, a credit assessment, a healthcare triage, a child protection case or a school curriculum, it is not a technology outcome. It is a human one. Leaders who reach for traditional approaches to manage this technology evolution will find themselves stuck at the starting line. The technology moves faster than the ability of most organisations to deploy guidance and frameworks to govern it. The communities and individuals on the receiving end of AI-influenced decisions cannot afford to wait for leadership to catch up.

AI differs from previous technologies as it challenges core decision making principles, operating models and organisational culture. AI can make decisions on our behalf which are not simply automated and gated workflows. Those decisions continuously evolve, update and learn and may lead to bias and misalignment with the organisation's culture. The impact on employees can be an environment in which empowerment is eroded by technology and one in which the concept of trust is challenged.

Following are five key change concepts that are challenged in AI led programs.

1. There is no go-live date

Technology Driven

Go-live is a date, a cutover plan, a milestone with a ribbon to cut. Phased rollouts are managed, reversible and signed off by the organisation before deployment.

AI Led

There is no single go-live. AI learns and changes after deployment. The system that was approved is not the system operating in six months.

AI implementations may have a theoretical go-live date, however as learning systems, they continue to evolve in production and will over months morph as they learn, until they no longer resemble the version approved at go-live. Key examples called out in the McKinsey report The Symbiotic Enterprise¹ refer to Physical AI and Robotics that learn new manoeuvres, such as how to pass around an unexpected object, or how to resource when a specific item is not found.

2. AI is doing and thinking for you

Technology Driven

Technology automates what humans have already decided to do. Humans decide, systems execute. Human oversight sits at every decision point.

AI Led

The line blurs. AI can reason, recommend and act. It actions and it thinks. That line shifts over time as the system learns, and the organisation may not notice when it crossed that line.

Emerging studies are already reporting that cognitive offload to AI tools is impacting critical thinking skills, with a higher impact in younger workers. The Center for Strategic Corporate Foresight and Sustainability reports the impact to be significant.² Whilst research is generally aimed at policy makers and educational institutions, it is interesting to consider the impact on the workplace from many aspects including future leadership, core skill development and job satisfaction. Organisations have an obligation to understand and respond to these shifts, not simply observe them.

3. Traditional testing will not catch every scenario

Technology Driven

Testing is finite and completable within defined parameters. Edge cases exist but the system behaves within predictable boundaries.

AI Led

AI behaviour in novel situations cannot be fully anticipated. Training data shapes responses in ways that may only reveal themselves in production, in front of a customer, or potentially in a critical decision.

While in both cases not every scenario can be tested, the consequences extrapolate significantly under AI. As demonstrated recently with the public backlash against the Australian aged care funding algorithm,³ AI systems learn and generate more outcomes over time, expanding the range of scenarios well beyond what was originally anticipated. This issue has been identified for some time. Lu, Zhu, Xu, Whittle and Xing of Data61, CSIRO note the need for additional efforts in verification and validation for AI systems, in particular highlighting ethical acceptance testing and the interaction between AI components as areas requiring specific attention.■

4. AI led change is inherently experimental

Technology Driven

Scope is defined before build begins. Agile approaches manage iteration but within agreed boundaries.

AI Led

AI led change is inherently experimental. AI systems expand their own capabilities through learning. Scope is not fixed at implementation. What the organisation agreed to deploy and what is operating six months later may be meaningfully different.

With AI systems' ability to learn and adjust to previously untested scenarios, it is important to maintain controls and ongoing monitoring of the AI implementation. The OECD extensively describes risk management for AI and considerations for deployment.■ Professional support is critical in this situation along with an adequate assessment of the initiative before proceeding.

Organisations such as Matrix.ai (<https://matrix.ai/>) are simulating the entire world population. Whilst the benefits of tapping into such a data source for testing of pharmaceuticals and similar applications seems phenomenal, so can be the effects of unintended consequences. Leaders need to ask what governance structures exist around such capabilities and what obligations arise when those simulations inform real decisions.

5. The impact on operating models is fundamental

Technology Driven

Processes reshape and some roles shift but the organisational logic remains human-led. Decision rights stay largely intact.

AI Led

The impact is fundamental. AI challenges who decides, how decisions are made, what skills matter and what culture the organisation can sustain.

McKinsey's concept of the Symbiotic Enterprise¹ is a relevant reference point here, pointing out that traditional, episodic change programs fail because AI behaviour is dynamic, data-dependent and constantly evolving. We are already in an era in which software factories operate over 24 hours, customer supply chains are handled autonomously, and the extended organisation largely operates as is. The Symbiotic Enterprise poses the question of when AI expands, will the organisation redefine the operating model to reinvent and fully embrace AI. Organisations that innovate the operating model whilst leveraging AI will move towards fully leveraging the benefits. This is an extensive exercise and the ability of most organisations to execute this change will be challenged.

The five concepts in this article are not technical problems. They are leadership challenges. And they land hardest on the people that organisations exist to serve; the customers, communities and individuals on the receiving end of AI implementations. Realising the comparison trap is not just good governance; it preserves trust.

Where to start

If you are challenged by these concepts or unsure how to proceed, that is a starting point from which to elevate governance.

Lucentis Advisory offers a briefing session designed specifically for this conversation. A structured, facilitated session that takes you through each of these areas, surfaces the gaps, and produces a clear picture of where your governance effort should begin.

To find out more or to book a session: bernadette@lucentisadvisory.com.au

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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² Center for Strategic Corporate Foresight and Sustainability (2025), published in *Society*, MDPI.

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³ ABC News (2026), *Inside the black box: aged care algorithm for support at home*. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-08-17/inside-the-black-box-aged-care-algorithm-for-support-at-home/107033970>

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